

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020
Page 1 of 4

The Chair opened the meeting

#1 Meeting was opened at 6:00 PM by virtual attendance via ZOOM Meeting

- **Finance Committee members (remotely):** Jen Audley, Fred Bowman, John Hanold, Jennifer Waryas, Francia Wisnewski, and Chris Menegoni
- **Finance Committee Absence (Excused)** Greg Garrison
- **Montague Selectboard members (remotely):** Rich Kuklewicz
- **Gill Selectboard & Finance Committee members (remotely):** Greg Snedeker (left 7:24), John Ward; Tupper Brown, Sandy Brown, Claire Chang, Peter Turban, and Timmie Smith
- **Gill-Montague Regional School Committee members (remotely):** Jane Oakes, Timmie Smith
- **Others participating remotely:** G-M Superintendent Brian Beck, G-M Operations Manager Joanne Blier, Montague Town Accountant Carolyn Olsen, Montague Town Administrator Steve Ellis, Gill Town Administrator Ray Purington, Jerri Higgins (Montague Reporter). Montague residents Jeff Singleton and Mike Naughton
- The Chair announced that the meeting is being recorded by Carolyn Olsen and the Town of Montague via Zoom. Remote participation for both members and the public was provided by Zoom. The link to the Zoom recording is <https://vimeo.com/487397945>

#2 **FY21 Mid-year Updates from Montague, Gill, GMRSD**

- **Montague:** Mr. Ellis reported that conservative forecasting protected Montague from severe impact of the state's final FY2021 budget; a \$109 K reduction in spending was approved at an October 2020 Special Town Meeting. A review of Financial Policies, the first since 2014, is in progress.
- **Gill:** Mr. Purington confirmed that Gill's Annual Town Meeting finally occurred, including a \$171 K increase in their education assessments (of which \$152,627 was for GMRSD) and a draw from their education stabilization fund. The impact on FY2021 was noticeable, and FY2022 is expected to be difficult as well.
- **GMRSD:** Since his arrival in the District Mr. Beck has devoted most of his attention to COVID-related measures, and acknowledged CARES support of ventilation and other improvements. There have been some savings to date from reduced athletic transportation costs and deferred filling of vacant positions. Ms. Blier reported that

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020
Page 2 of 4

declining enrollment in the District (a consequence of delayed enrollment in pre-K, kindergarten, and increased home-schooling) will probably result in minimal Ch. 70 aid increases in FY2022, resulting from “hold-harmless” calculations. Ms. Chang predicted that the District and towns may need to dip into Excess & Deficiency and stabilization funds.

#3 Review GMRSD Assessment Methodology & FY22 Budget Calendar

- Ms. Audley presented an overview of “Gill, Montague and GMRSD” school facilities and the Affordable Assessment calculation, and referred to a “History of the Affordable Assessment” by Mike Naughton dated October 10, 2019 (see Attached List). She emphasized that although the AA agreement was expected to apply to years 2014 -2018, per a Compact among the towns and the District, it has been accepted for application to later years as well. Comments from the original Technical Panel members Messrs. Singleton, Brown and Naughton followed, concerning the initiation of the Compact and its application. The conclusion is that all parties are comfortable with the AA and have no desire for amendment.
- Ms. Audley presented the “GMRSD Historical Assessments FY16-FY22” table and the “GMRSD FY22 Proposed Budget Schedule” provided by the District. Highlights of the calendar included review of preliminary budget assumptions by the School Committee (December 8), establishment of Montague’s preliminary Affordable Assessment (end-January) and final presentation to the towns (early March 2021).

#4 Forecasting and Planning Updates from Montague, Gill, GMRSD

- Montague: Mr. Ellis mentioned unusual New Growth in recent years, from utility personal property, as a one-time boost that will not be repeated. It has contributed to a planned \$500 K Excess Capacity figure as a factor in forecasted revenue, as has an increase from \$203 K to \$216 K in median assessed value of a single family home. Offsetting this is a likely flat estimate of Local Receipts. An effort to create a multi-year financial forecast tool for Montague and review of Financial Planning policies will be ongoing in FY2021.
- GMRSD: The District has received building condition reports for the Montague-owned buildings, which come with extensive 15-year capital and maintenance plans. These have been shared with the Capital Improvements Committee. Similar reports are desired for Gill and for the middle/high school building; these require funding from Gill, which has not yet been appropriated.

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020
Page 3 of 4

- Gill: No New Growth of consequence is likely, but the end of excluded debt payments is in sight and may make proposed excluded debt possible in the future.
- **#5 Needs and Next Steps**
- No suggestions offered

#6 Gill Committees and Boards Adjourn (8:03 PM)

#7 Approve Meeting Minutes

- The revised minutes for the meetings of October 28 and November 18, 2020 were distributed in advance and accepted.

Finance Committee Moved:

To approve minutes of October 28, 2020

Vote: Bowman-Aye, Wisnewski-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Hanold-Aye, Audley –Aye, Waryas –Aye

To approve minutes of November 18, 2020

Vote: Bowman-Aye, Wisnewski-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Hanold-Aye, Audley –Aye, Waryas –Aye

#8 Budget Launch Letter to Town Meeting

- Ms. Audley confirmed that she wrote a letter describing the budget process, which was enclosed in a late November mailing to all Town Meeting Members

• **#9 Topics Not Anticipated, or Proposed for Next Meeting**

- No suggestions offered

#10 Motion to Adjourn

Finance Committee Moved:

To adjourn at 8:00 PM

Vote: Menegoni–Aye, Bowman-Aye, Wisnewski-Aye, Garrison-Aye, Hanold-Aye, Audley –Aye, Waryas-Aye.

Respectfully submitted by John Hanold

FINANCE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
UPSTAIRS MEETING ROOM, 1 AVENUE A, TURNERS FALLS, MA
WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 2, 2020
Page 4 of 4

List of Documents and Exhibits:

- Gill, Montague, and GMRSD
- History of Affordable Assessment (October 19 2019)
- FY2022 GMRSD Proposed Budget Schedule Calendar